DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 620 SP 037 971

AUTHOR	Strong, Wallace C.
TITLE	Low Expectations by Teachers within an Academic Context.
PUB DATE	1998-04
NOTE	3p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indians; Educational Discrimination; Elementary Secondary Education; Low Achievement; Minority Group Children; *Racial Discrimination; Self Fulfilling Prophecies; Students; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Expectations of Students; Teacher Influence; Teacher Student Relationship; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS	*Native Americans

ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes various studies exploring the effects of racial bias on poor academic performance by Native Americans. Historically, school counselors and teachers have had low expectations for their Native American students. A 1968 study of Native American dropouts indicated that home support was a major factor in students' dropout behavior, as was lack of encouragement from the school. A 1993 study of 991 Native American women reported that Native American students were told in both direct and indirect ways that they were not worthy or good at anything. Many Native American students are encouraged to pursue a vocational rather than academic track. Native American writers and researchers note that this attitude persists, despite attempts at reform, and teachers' low expectations of Native American students confirm other teachers' doubts about these students' performance in the classroom. The literature documents the interactional behavior between teacher expectations and student achievement. This interaction is a dominant influence underlying teacher collaboration with young Indians in the classroom. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 420 620

Low Expectations by Teachers within an Academic Context

Wallace C. Strong
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
for AERA at San Diego, CA
April 13, 1998

W. Strong

Introduction

In 1903,U.S. Indian Commissioner William A. Jones made this comment:

> Give the Indian a white man's chance. Educate him in the rudiments of our language. Teach him to work. Send him to his home, , and tell him he must practice what he has been taught or starve. It will in a generation or more re-generate the race. It will exterminate the Indian but develop a man [emphasis added].
> (Coleman, 1993: 46)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

In 1893 Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to withhold rations and other annuities from parents and guardians who refused to send their children to school (Coleman, 1993:45). This should have been a godsend to many tribal groups for in contemporary society there have been studies on tribes like the Pima, and hundreds of others, who are now suffering from rations doled out by the government. It trapped them in a diet of saturated fats that escalated the prevalence of diabetes.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon (1968) reported in their study of Native American dropouts, that home support was a major factor, also "lack of encouragement from the school," was a major factor. In her study of nine hundred ninety-one Native American women, Ardy Bowker (1993) reported that when these women told their stories about their school experience they were told in both direct and indirect ways that they were not worthy or good at anything.

My own experience of low expectations by counselors and teachers left a dramatic impression on my own expectations to succeed. The counselors at my high school persistently advised me to opt for the vocational track. I took the vocational track, participated in baseball and became an expert in leather crafts. When I look back at my experience of low expectations from high school staff, I wonder if I sold out myself, or if the school treated me shabbily because Native American parents were not involved in school policy-making and teaching. Now I'm completing a doctorate degree beyond anyone's expectations, except myself - I clearly see the "race card" that was dealt to the majority of Native American students.

Implications and possibilities of change

Wilma Mankiller, in her book Mankiller, a Chief and her People, states that:

> Some things never change. Almost since its inception, there have been many attempts to reform the BIA. I guess I agree with former Creek Chief Claude Cox of Oklahoma, who said reforming the BIA was kind of like rotating four bald tires on an old car. The net result would be no change (Mankiller, 1993: 168)

An additional humorous anonymous note is the repartee:

> Grandma and her friend would ride her horse five miles to school in a raging blizzard, and grandpa would be walking behind carrying his books, lunch, wood for the stove and an apple for the teacher.

Finally, Dr. Lionel Demontigney (1968) states that teachers' attitude of low expectancy confirms teacher doubts about young Indians' performance in the classroom or school setting.

Conclusion

For Freire (1990), specific literacy programs are shaped by what he calls "the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and their struggle to recover their lost humanity (28). Delpit (1996)has documented relevant examples of Native American experiences on low expectations for Native American people. Thus, the literature documents this interactional behavior. I call this interaction a dominant inference underlying teacher collaboration with young Indians in the classroom.

REFERENCES

Bowker, A. (1993). Sisters in the Blood: The Education of Women in Native America. Newton, MA: WEEA Publishing Center.

Coleman, M. C. (1993). American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 45, 46.

Delpit, L. (1996) Skills and Other Dilemmas of a Progressive Black Educator. American Educator, v. 20 , n. 3, fall.

Demontigney, L. (1967) Teacher Attitudes of Low Expectation. Workshop handout. University of Colorado Summer Program.

Freire, P. (1990) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum Press, 28.